



## HISTORICAL SECURITY COUNCIL

### Topic 2: The Korean War (1950–1953): The UN's First Major Collective Security Action

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## Committee overview

The Historical Security Council has the responsibility for international peace and security; Member States agree to “accept and carry out” Council decisions, and the Council may investigate situations, call for pacific settlement, determine a breach of the peace (Article 39), and decide measures to affront the situation just like in the present day security council. The prevalent difference is that the debate in this committee will take place within the historical setting being discussed. This entails that all the information and evidence used in the debate is required to be knowledge present in the period of time discussed, in this case 1950–53. The following conditions are the preliminary guidelines outlining the composition, setting and delegate responsibility of the security council in 1950–53 to be followed in the procedure of the FloMUN HSC debate.

**Composition and voting in 1950–53.** In 1950 the Council had 11 members (5 permanent + 6 elected) and—crucially for a Historical simulation—substantive and procedural decisions required 7 affirmative votes (not 9, which is the post-1965 system). Substantive decisions also require the “concurring votes” of the permanent members (the veto rule), though UN practice distinguished negative votes from abstentions/absence in ways central to the Korean case.

**Historical setting and information environment.** Meetings relevant to early Korea took place at Lake Success near New York; delegates operated with 1950 knowledge, uncertainty, and communication constraints (telegrams, press reports, UN Commission reporting). Use later scholarship only to interpret, not to “predict.”

**Delegate responsibilities in a Historical Security Council.** Delegates must:

- Defend their nation’s stance on the conflict.
- Decide whether to treat the conflict as a “dispute” (Chapter VI framing) or a “breach of the peace” (Article 39 framing). This definition of the conditions of the conflict should be a guiding component to your nation’s stance on the issue, alongside a key area on which to debate based on the information about the conflict.
- Negotiate operative language that can pass the vote threshold, and anticipate escalation risks (wider war; great-power confrontation; legitimacy crises inside the UN). This is the primary goal of the UNSC and therefore the main goal to keep in mind when voting on or producing resolutions.

## Background on the topic

Post second world-war Korea was split into two different state projects: Soviet-backed leadership in the north and US-backed leadership in the south, under a temporary division at the 38th parallel that became politically entrenched. UN involvement in Korea predated the war. The General Assembly’s work on Korean independence produced a UN commission structure, and later resolutions treated the Government in the south as “lawfully established” in the territory where UN observation had been possible, a point the Security Council explicitly recalled when acting in June 1950. This mattered because it anchored the Council’s language of “aggression” and legitimised assistance to the south as defence of a recognised government rather than intervention in a civil war.

The June 1950 invasion triggered immediate UNSC action. Resolution 82 determined that the attack constituted a breach of the peace, called for cessation of hostilities and withdrawal to the 38th parallel, tasked the UN Commission on Korea with reporting, and called on Member States to assist implementation while refraining from assisting the northern authorities. Two days later, Resolution 83 recommended that UN Members furnish assistance to repel the armed attack and restore international peace and security, noting both the UN Commission's reporting and an appeal for effective steps. That recommendation, adopted amid Soviet absence and with two members not voting, became part of the political-legal foundation for US and allied military action framed as UN-backed. On 7 July 1950, Resolution 84 recommended that forces be made available to a unified command "under the United States", requested that the US designate the commander, authorised use of the UN flag, and requested US reporting to the Council—creating the distinctive structure of the UN military effort in Korea.

By late July, the Council also addressed humanitarian dimensions through Resolution 85, requesting coordination of relief and support to civilians through the unified command and UN organs/agencies. Beyond the first month, the conflict escalated and internationalised further. The Office of the Historian notes that after UN-authorized forces pushed north, the People's Republic of China entered the war in late 1950, followed by prolonged stalemate and eventual armistice in 1953, ending major combat without a peace treaty.

### Key terms and definitions

**Breach of the peace:** A Charter term in Chapter VII indicating a serious disruption to international peace; used explicitly in the Council's Korea resolutions.

**Peace enforcement:** Use of military force authorised/endorsed by the Security Council to restore peace (distinct from traditional peacekeeping); frequently cited as Korea's precedent.

**38th Parallel:** The line of latitude dividing North and South Korea after World War II; it became the political and military boundary between the two states prior to the outbreak of war.

**UN Command (UNC):** The unified command structure led by the United States under UN authorization to coordinate multinational military operations in Korea.

**Collective Security:** A system in which states agree to take joint action against threats to peace; under the UN Charter, an attack on one member may be treated as an attack on all.

### Relevant UN bodies and resolutions

The Security Council and the UN General Assembly were the two key councils of the UN that dealt with this conflict, producing a series of resolutions throughout the three years of conflict. These resolutions—especially Resolutions 82 and 85—are crucial in the debate; it is highly recommended that they are referenced and used as they were the prevalent resolutions that allowed for the conflict to de-escalate and eventually come to an end.

- **UNSC Resolution 82** - Breach-of-peace determination; withdrawal demand; UN Korea Commission reporting; call for Member State support and non-assistance to the northern

authorities. Adopted 9–0 with 1 abstention; USSR absent.

- **UNSC Resolution 83** - Recommends furnishing assistance to repel the attack and restore peace; adopted 7–1; two members did not vote; USSR absent.
- **UNSC Resolution 84** - Recommends a unified command under the US; authorises UN flag; requests reporting; adopted 7–0 with 3 abstentions; USSR absent.
- **UNSC Resolution 85** - Requests UN system co-operation on civilian relief “in connection with” unified command responsibilities; adopted 10–0 with 1 abstention.
- **UNSC Resolution 88** - Invites a PRC representative under Rule 39 for discussion of the UN Command report; adopted 8–2 with 1 abstention.
- **UNGA Resolution 293 (IV)** - Key GA “status language” about the government in the south and continuation of the Korea commission mandate, referenced in UNSC action.
- **UNGA Resolution 377 A (V)** - “Uniting for Peace” procedures designed to respond when the Council fails to act due to great-power non-unanimity; adopted amid Cold War deadlock dynamics and explicitly linked in UN legal history to the Soviet boycott context.
- **Korean Armistice Agreement** - Military ceasefire signed at Panmunjom; ends major hostilities without a final peace settlement.

## Major actors and their relevance

The following actors were all members of the Security Council in 1950. The list states the most crucial members and their stance towards the conflict:

- **United States** - Rapid collective response; seeks legitimacy for military assistance and command unity; emphasises breach of peace framing.
- **United Kingdom** - Supports collective response; prefers coalition cohesion and UN legitimacy while managing escalation risks.
- **USSR** - Boycotts June–July meetings (historical); later challenges legality; seeks PRC seat recognition.
- **France** - Supports Council action; attentive to precedent and broader Cold War implications.
- **Republic of China** - Supports action against DPRK; resists PRC participation/recognition questions.
- **India** - Seeks de-escalation and procedural legitimacy; cautious about military escalation; historically did not vote on Res 83 and abstained on Res 84.
- **Egypt** - Generally cautious; emphasises restraint and legitimacy; did not vote on Res 83; abstained on Res 84; opposed PRC invitation only by abstaining (Res 88).
- **Yugoslavia** - Independent line; pushes hearing both sides/mediation; abstains on Res 82 & 85; votes against Res 83; abstains on Res 84.
- **Norway** - Supports collective response; aligns with Western security logic.
- **Ecuador** - Supports collective response; aligns with Western security logic.
- **Cuba** - Supports action against DPRK; later votes against inviting PRC representative.